DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 161 EA 027 390

TITLE	School Facilities. Accessibility for the Disabled Still an Issue. Report to Congressional Requesters.
INSTITUTION	General Accounting Office, Washington, DC. Health, Education, and Human Services Div.
REPORT NO	GAO-HEHS-96-73
PUB DATE	Dec 95
NOTE	40p.
AVAILABLE FROM	U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015 (first copy free; $2 each additional copy; quantity discounts available).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Accessibility (for Disabled); *Compliance (Legal); *Disabilities; *Educational Facilities; Educational Facilities Improvement; Educational Finance; Elementary Secondary Education; Expenditures; Federal Aid; School Districts; *School District Spending
IDENTIFIERS	*Americans with Disabilities Act 1990; *General Accounting Office; Rehabilitation Act 1973

ABSTRACT

The requirement that programs and activities of schools receiving federal financial assistance be accessible to the disabled has been in force for two decades. This paper presents findings of a General Accounting Office study that examined the accessibility of existing schools nationwide. To evaluate the degree to which accessibility was still a problem, the study used school officials' reports of the amount spent in the last 3 years and the amount they need to spend in the next 3 years to provide access for the disabled. The survey was augmented with visits to selected school districts. Data were derived from a national survey of 9,956 schools, which elicited a 78 percent response rate, and from site visits to 41 schools in 10 school districts. Over half (53 percent) of the schools reported having spent a total of $1.5 billion in the last 3 years on accessibility. Only about 20 percent of schools reported that such spending was not needed. A total of 56 percent of all schools estimated that they will need a total of $5.2 billion more for accessibility in the next 3 years. Only about 26 percent of schools reported that such spending will not be needed. The site visits showed that schools' physical accessibility varied enormously within school districts. The law does not require a school district to make each of its existing facilities or every part of a facility accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Lack of funding was cited by many as the chief reason for not making schools accessible. Twelve tables and 3 figures are included. Appendices contain a copy of questionnaire items, technical notes, statistical data, and a list of GAO contacts and staff acknowledgements. (LMI)

United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Requesters

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December 1995

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Accessibility for the Disabled Still an Issue

ED 392 161

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GAO

United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Health, Education, and
Human Services Division

B-261623

December 29, 1995

The Honorable Carol Moseley-Braun
The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
The Honorable Claiborne Pell
The Honorable Paul Simon
The Honorable Paul Wellstone
United States Senate

To meet the educational needs of America's disabled children, schools must provide access to programs and services. Accessibility to programs and activities in public school facilities has been required by federal law since 1973,[1] and new schools are designed to comply with current codes, including accessibility requirements. Little is known, however, about the accessibility of existing schools nationwide.

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are both applicable to accessibility in schools. The ADA applies to all programs or services provided by state and local governments, and section 504 applies to all schools receiving federal financial assistance. Accessibility requirements, which are the same under these two laws, differ according to whether the facility is existing or new. For existing buildings, school districts are required to operate their programs and activities so that when viewed in their entirety the programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities. The law does not require a school district to make each of its existing facilities or every part of a facility accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. The second and more stringent standard applies to new construction and certain renovations to existing facilities. Buildings initiated after 1979 under section 504 and after 1992 for the ADA must be readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities and must comply with design standards. In this report, we use accessibility to indicate standards for both existing buildings and for new construction or alterations.

To obtain information on the condition of America's schools, including accessibility to individuals with disabilities, we surveyed a national sample of schools and augmented the survey with visits to selected school districts.[2] Because this was part of a larger survey of school facilities,

[1]Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

[2]In these site visits, we were looking at the general condition of each school, including its physical accessibility. We did not attempt to determine whether these schools legally complied with federal mandates.

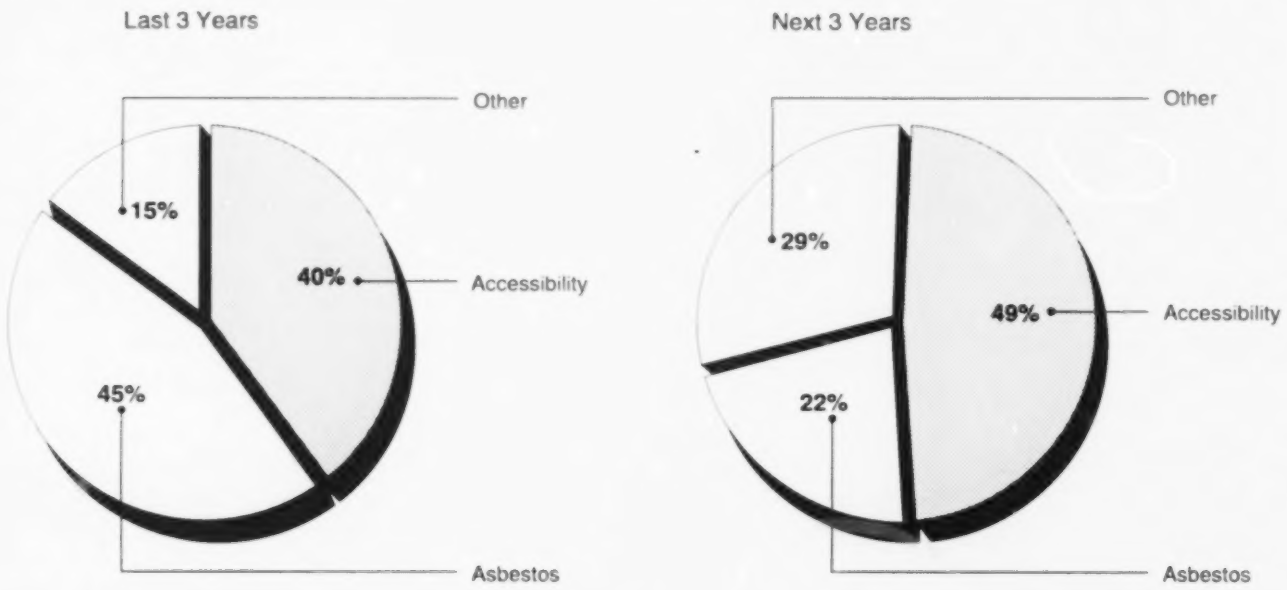
however, our questions on accessibility were limited. We used school officials' reports of the amount spent in the last 3 years and the amount they need to spend in the next 3 years to provide access for the disabled to evaluate the degree to which accessibility was still a problem. Since we do not know whether officials reported all of what needs to be done or only a small portion, or perhaps more than what needs to be done, these figures should be viewed cautiously. Also, these estimates were based on school officials' understanding of accessibility requirements. See appendix I for relevant survey items and appendix II for a full discussion of methodology.

We conducted our analyses at both national and state levels. Furthermore, we looked at spending patterns according to several school characteristics, for example, location (region of the country and type of community), school size (enrollment) and type (level), and student characteristic (economic level and minority status). We did not attempt to verify self-reported data.

This report, one in a series of reports[3] responding to your request for information on the physical condition of the nation's public schools, addresses the accessibility of today's schools. School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools, the first of these reports, reported that accessibility for the disabled accounted for the largest share of the estimated $11 billion needed to be spent on federal mandates in the next 3 years, supplanting asbestos as the largest share of spending on such mandates. (See fig. 1.) This report provides a more detailed analysis of that information.

[3]See School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools (GAO/HEHS-95-61, Feb. 1, 1995) and School Facilities: America's Schools Not Designed or Equipped for 21st Century (GAO/HEHS-95-95, Apr. 4, 1995).

Figure 1: Schools Estimate That Spending on Accessibility Will Supplant Spending on Asbestos Abatement as the Largest Share of Spending on Federal Mandates



Note: "Other" includes lead in water/paint, underground storage tanks, radon, and other mandated requirements, such as those governing pesticides and chemicals.

Results in Brief

The requirement that programs and activities of schools receiving federal financial assistance be accessible to the disabled has been in force for two decades. Yet no comprehensive nationwide study has been done or is currently planned to evaluate schools' accessibility to the disabled (hereafter referred to as "accessibility"). Meanwhile, the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)—although not changing the accessibility requirements for schools from the earlier law—has highlighted the need to improve accessibility.

Over half—53 percent—of schools nationwide reported having spent a total of $1.5 billion in the last 3 years on accessibility. Only about 20 percent of schools reported that such spending was not needed. A total of 56 percent of all schools estimated that they will need a total of $5.2 billion more for accessibility in the next 3 years. Only about 26 percent of schools reported that such spending will not be needed.

At the district level, the situation is quite complex. As we saw in our site visits, just because one district school is fully accessible does not mean that other district schools are as well. However, the law does not require a school district to make each of its existing facilities or every part of a facility accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Lack of funding was cited by many as the chief reason for not making schools accessible.

Background

Accessibility for the disabled to schools receiving federal financial assistance was first required by law in section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Another section of the act established the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (A&TBCB), whose purpose in part was to determine the adequacy of measures by federal, state, and local governments and other public or nonprofit agencies to eliminate such barriers. The most recent law, title II of the ADA, did not change the requirement of accessibility to disabled individuals as originally set forth in section 504.

For existing buildings, school districts are required to operate their programs and activities so that when viewed in their entirety the programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities. A school may not be required to make structural changes in existing buildings where other methods are effective in achieving accessibility, such as moving a program to an accessible floor. For new construction and certain renovations to existing buildings, regulations promulgated pursuant to the ADA and section 504, the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) and the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), specify the technical requirements for schools' accessibility to disabled individuals. These regulations require public school facilities to provide parking spaces, access to different floors through elevators (platform lifts instead of elevators may be used in some circumstances) or ramps, public telephones, and automatic and power-assisted doors, among other features.

Besides requirements in the law, accessibility to school facilities also affects the degree to which schools can successfully implement education reform. At the heart of education reform is the tenet that all children have access to high-quality education—regardless of where they live, their family income, their ethnic background, or if they have disabilities. Also, school building accessibility has implications for disabled parents' and other community members' involvement in education and other community activities and services that take place in schools.

Even though federal law has required schools to be accessible to disabled individuals since 1973, recent studies and the media have reported that accessibility continues to challenge schools.

Principal Findings

Scope of Accessibility Problem Unknown

The Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services, and Developmental Disabilities Amendments of 1978 amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and required the A&TBCB to determine the costs to state and local governments of affording people with disabilities full access to all programs and activities receiving federal assistance. However, this cost study was never conducted because the Board lacked the resources.[4] Officials from the Departments of Education and Justice and the A&TBCB told us that, to their knowledge, no national survey of school accessibility has been done or is being planned. Even the biennial school survey by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has not included questions on facilities' accessibility since the late 1970s, according to one official.[5]

Half the Schools Reported Spending $1.5 Billion in the Last 3 Years

Nationwide, 53 percent of schools reported spending a total of $1.5 billion during the last 3 years on accessibility. About 27 percent of schools reported that they had spent no money in the last 3 years on accessibility, while an additional 20 percent of schools reported that no money was needed for this purpose (see app. III). Our site visits illustrated this: officials in Chicago and New Orleans said that most schools were not accessible.

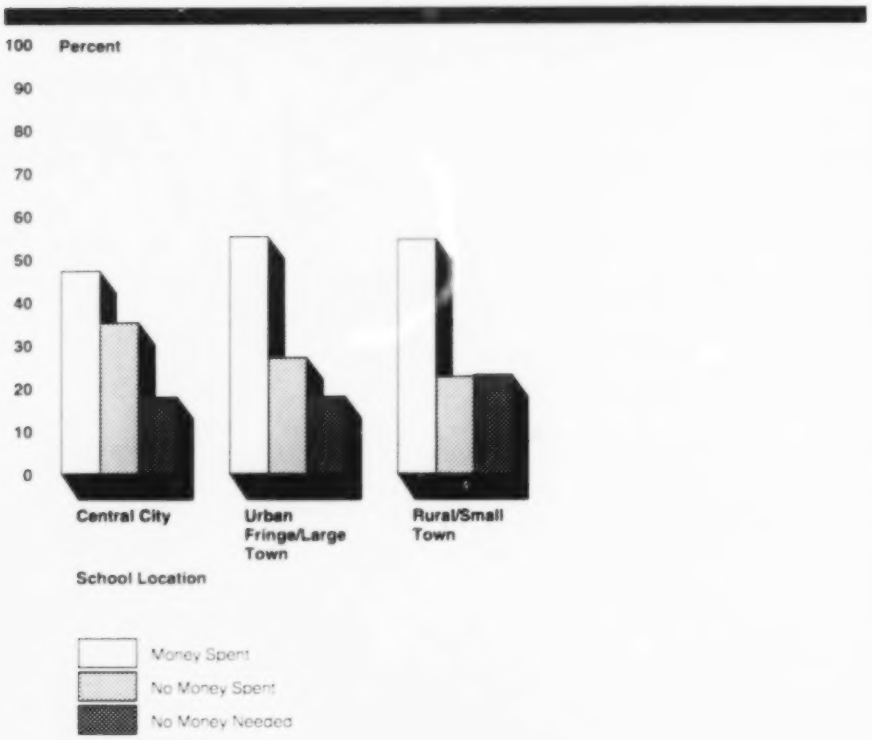
Although all types of communities spent money for accessibility, schools in central cities were less likely than schools in the urban fringe and large towns or rural areas and small towns to report having spent money on accessibility. However, schools in rural areas and small towns were more likely to report that spending was not needed (see fig. 2). Regionally, only 44 percent of schools in the Northeast reported spending on accessibility, while over half the schools in other regions reported such spending. (See app. III, table III.3.) However, a greater proportion of the amount of

[4]Summary of Existing Legislation Affecting People With Disabilities, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (Washington, D.C.: June 1992), pp. 138-139.

[5]It has, however, asked about "program" accessibility. In 1993, the survey had one question that asked about the number of disabled students enrolled in gifted and talented programs.

spending reported by northeastern schools was above the average for all schools. (See app. III, table III.4.)

Figure 2: Money Reported Needed, Not Needed, and Spent for Improving School Accessibility in Various Types of Communities in the Last 3 Years



The average amount reportedly spent on accessibility was $40,000 per school, although amounts varied widely.[6] About 80 percent of schools nationwide that reported spending for accessibility spent less than $40,000. The average amount spent by this group was about $8,000 per school. While only about 20 percent of schools reported spending more than $40,000, spending by this group accounted for about 84 percent of all funds spent. These above average spenders were frequently large schools and those that tend to be located in the Northeast (see fig. 3).

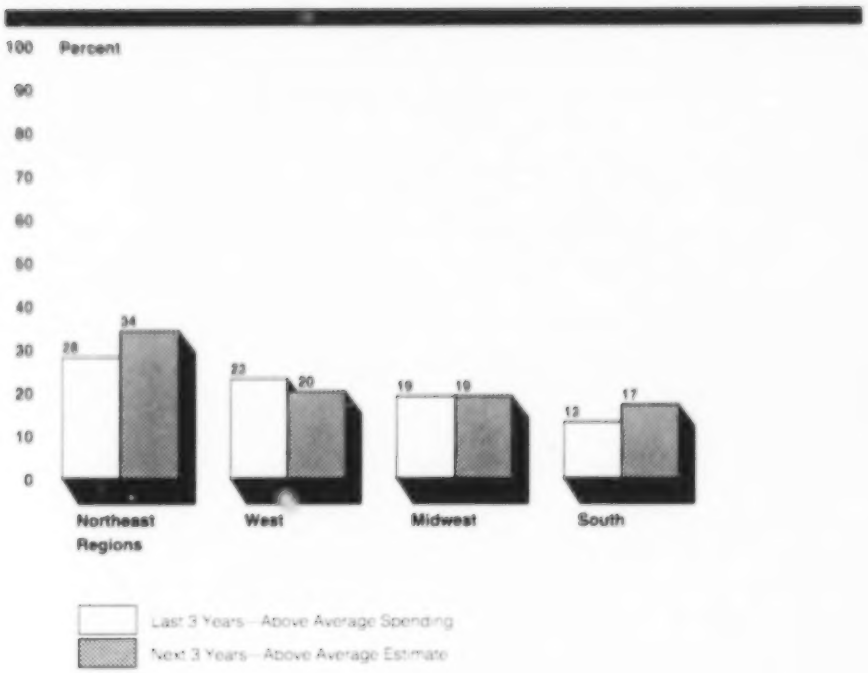
[6]Individual respondents reported as low as $1 to as high as $16.5 million spent for a single school. The median amount reported was $6,500.

Virtually every state reported spending money for accessibility during the last 3 years. However, the proportion of a state's schools spending money ranged from 7 percent in the District of Columbia to 69 percent in New Mexico. Forty percent of schools in New York reported that spending was not needed, compared with 1 percent in the District of Columbia that reported that spending was not needed. In four states (Nevada, Arkansas, Maryland, and Oklahoma) and the District of Columbia, over 95 percent of schools that spent money on accessibility were in the below average spender group. Only California, New Jersey, and Hawaii reported that, of their schools' spending on accessibility in the last 3 years, more than one-third were in the above average group, with Hawaii reporting over 60 percent of its schools in this group. (See app. III, table III.2.)

We could not project information on the dollar amounts that states spent on accessibility.[7] However, by region, the Northeast reported more above average spending than others. (See fig. 3 and app. III, table III.3.)

[7]Because of the wide range of amounts reported, we could not report sufficiently precise state-level estimates on dollars spent on accessibility. See appendix II for a discussion of sampling errors.

Figure 3: More Northeastern Schools Reported Above Average Spending on Accessibility Than Schools in Other Regions



Notes: Last 3 years, average reported per school expenditure on disabled accessibility = $40,000.

Next 3 years, estimated average per school expenditure on disabled accessibility = $124,000.

When we looked at spending patterns according to school characteristics, we found that spending was not confined to schools of particular locations, sizes, or demographic characteristics. However, some notable differences are shown in table 1. (See app. III, table III.4 for details.)

Table 1: Characteristics of Schools Most Likely to Report Above Average Spending to Improve Accessibility in the Last 3 Years

Characteristics (mutually exclusive)	Characteristics of schools most likely to report above average spending
Location	
Community type	Central city and urban fringe/large town
Geographic region	Northeast
School characteristics	
Size	Large
Level	Secondary
Student characteristics	
Proportion of students approved for free or reduced lunch	Less than 20 percent
Proportion of minority students	Greater than 50.5 percent

Over Half of Schools Reported Needing $5.2 Billion to Improve Accessibility Nationwide in the Next 3 Years

About 56 percent of all schools estimated that they will need to spend money in the next 3 years to improve accessibility. About 26 percent of schools estimated that no money will be needed to improve accessibility in the next 3 years, while an additional 19 percent reported that accessibility requirements were "unknown."

Schools nationwide reported that they will probably need to spend about three times more in the next 3 years to improve accessibility than they spent in the last 3 years, for a total of $5.2 billion. About 79 percent of schools that expect to spend money on accessibility in the next 3 years estimated that they will spend less than the average of $124,000.[5] The average amount estimated for these below average spenders was about $34,000 per school. The remaining 21 percent of schools—the above average spenders—accounted for 78 percent of all funds estimated to be spent.

States varied widely in the proportion of schools that reported needing to spend money on accessibility in the next 3 years, from 93 percent in the District of Columbia to 34 percent in New York and Hawaii (see app. IV, table IV.1). In contrast to spending on accessibility reported for the past 3 years, over twice as many states (Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) and the District of Columbia estimated that over a third of their schools' spending on accessibility will be above the average. Only one state—Mississippi—estimated that more than 95 percent of its schools' spending money on

[5]The median amount was $39,500.

accessibility will be below the average. Maryland, Connecticut, and the District of Columbia estimated that more than 50 percent of their schools' spending on accessibility will be more than $124,000 or above the average. (See app. IV, tables IV.2 and IV.3.)

Characteristics of schools most likely to report planning to spend money on improving accessibility in the next 3 years appear in table 2. (See also app. IV, table IV.4.)

Table 2: Characteristics of Schools Most Likely to Report Above Average Spending to Improve Accessibility in the Next 3 Years

Characteristics (mutually exclusive)	Characteristics of schools most likely to report above average spending
Location	
Community type	Central city/urban fringe/large town
Geographic region	Northeast
School characteristics	
Size	Large
Level	Secondary
Student characteristics	
Proportion of students approved for free or reduced lunch	No notable difference among schools
Proportion of minority students	50.5 percent or more

Schools' Physical Accessibility Varies

During our site visits, we observed that schools' physical accessibility varied enormously. The schools we visited ranged from being fully physically accessible—all classrooms and other areas—to being partly inaccessible—allowing access to the front door but little else in the school—to being even totally inaccessible. For example, we visited a new school in Pomona, California, that is fully accessible—even its auditorium stage has an elevator. In contrast, also in Pomona, we visited a two-story school that was accessible on the ground floor but had no elevator, although it had plans to install one. In Chicago, we visited schools that were totally inaccessible. Accessibility to bathrooms was a problem in many schools. The law, however, does not require a school district to make each of its existing facilities or every part of a facility accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

Lack of Funding Cited as Reason for Variable Accessibility

Although our survey did not ask the reasons why districts have been unable to meet facility requirements of federal mandates, many survey respondents addressed the issue in their comments and we explored the issue in our site visits. School officials told us that they could not make schools accessible because of lack of funding. For example, because of the expense of installing elevators and other needed changes, we were told, few of the schools in Chicago were accessible.

Officials also reported that money spent on accessibility may be "unreasonable" or at the expense of other areas. Following are typical comments:

"In my district, we no longer have a curriculum department, but we have a handicapped elevator that just cost $250,000 to build—for a student who is no longer in that building and who used a stair climber successfully when he was there."

"The ADA requirements were a major reason we had to replace two older schools. These costs, when added to other costs for renovations and modifications, resulted in overall costs for repairs which exceeded the costs for new facilities."

The first example likely illustrates a confusion about what the law requires for program accessibility. Accessibility experts have observed that local officials sometimes misunderstand section 504 and ADA requirements and that some decisions leading to accessibility expenditures by local schools may not, in fact, be mandated by section 504 or the ADA.

Conclusion

Accessibility is clearly an important, complicated, and expensive issue for schools. It was beyond the scope of this study to comprehensively assess schools' compliance with accessibility laws and the amount of money it would cost to make schools fully accessible. However, the answers to our two survey questions and our site visits suggest the magnitude of the problem: schools report that they have already spent a lot to improve accessibility and that they need to spend much more.

We are sending copies of this report to appropriate House and Senate committees and all members, the Secretary of Education, and other interested parties.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Eleanor L. Johnson, Assistant Director, at (202) 512-7209. A list of major contributors to this report appears in appendix V.

Linda G. Morra
Director, Education and
Employment Issues

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Abbreviations

A&TBCB	Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board
ADA	Americans With Disabilities Act
ADAAG	ADA Accessibility Guidelines
NCES	National Center for Educational Statistics
SASS	Schools and Staffing Survey
SMSA	standard metropolitan statistical area
UFAS	Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards

Questionnaire Items

13. During the last 3 years, how much money has been spent on the federal mandates listed below of this school's *on-site* buildings? *Include money spent in 1993-1994. If exact amounts are not readily available, give your best estimate. Enter zero if none. Circle "1" if spending was not needed.*

Federal Mandates	Spending Not Needed	Amount Spent
Accessibility for students with disabilities	1	$_____.00
Managing/correcting:	1	$_____.00
Asbestos	1	$_____.00
Lead in water/paint	1	$_____.00
Underground storage tanks (USTs)	1	$_____.00
Radon	1	$_____.00
Other (specify:_____)	1	$_____.00

14. How much money will probably need to be spent during the next 3 years on these federal mandates for this school's *on-site* buildings? *If exact amounts are not readily available, give your best estimate. If spending will not be needed, circle "1." If unknown, circle "2."*

Federal Mandates	Spending Will Not Be Needed	Unknown	Amount Probably Needed
Accessibility for students with disabilities	1	2	$_____.00
Managing/correcting:	1	2	$_____.00
Asbestos	1	2	$_____.00
Lead in water/paint	1	2	$_____.00
Underground storage tanks (USTs)	1	2	$_____.00
Radon	1	2	$_____.00
Other(specify:_____)	1	2	$_____.00

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Appendix II

Technical Appendix

Scope and Methodology Overview

To determine the condition of America's schools and extent to which America's 80,000 schools have the physical capacity to support 21st century technology and education reform for all students, we surveyed a national sample of public schools and their associated districts and visited selected schools districts. Various experts advised us on the design and analysis of this project.[9]

We sent surveys to a nationally representative sample of about 10,000 public schools in over 5,000 associated school districts. For our sample, we used the public school sample of the Department of Education's 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), which is a multifaceted, nationally representative survey sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and administered by the Bureau of the Census.

In addition to asking about the physical condition of schools, we asked how much money schools had spent during the last 3 years on selected federal mandates, including accessibility for disabled students. Likewise, we asked about anticipated spending on federal mandates during the next 3 years. A list of relevant survey items appears in appendix I. A copy of the full survey is included in School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools.

We directed the survey to those officials who are most knowledgeable about facilities—such as facilities directors and other central office administrators of the districts housing our sampled schools. Our analyses were based on responses from 78 percent of the schools sampled. Analyses of nonrespondent characteristics showed them to be similar to respondent characteristics. Survey findings have been statistically adjusted (weighted) to produce estimates representative at national and state levels. All data were self-reported, and we did not independently verify their accuracy.

In addition, we visited 41 schools in 10 selected school districts varying in location, size, and minority composition to augment and illustrate our survey results. We also reviewed the literature on education reform. We conducted our study between January 1994 and March 1995 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

[9]See School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools (GAO/HEHS-95-61, Feb. 1, 1995), appendix III, for a full list.

Survey Participants

For our review of the physical condition of America's schools, we wanted to determine physical condition and spending as perceived by the most knowledgeable school district personnel. To accomplish this, we mailed questionnaires to superintendents of school districts associated with a nationally representative sample of public schools. We asked the superintendents to have district personnel, such as facilities directors familiar with school facilities, answer the questionnaires. The questionnaires gathered information about a variety of school facility issues, including spending associated with federal mandates. For our school sample, we used the sample for the 1993-94 SASS.

Sampling Strategy

The 1993-94 SASS sample is designed to give several types of estimates, including both national and state-level estimates. It is necessarily a very complex sample. Essentially, however, it is stratified by state and grade level (elementary, secondary, and combined). It also has separate strata for schools with large Native American populations and for Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. A detailed description of the sample and discussion of the sampling issues appear in NCES' technical report on the 1993-94 SASS sample.[10]

Survey Response

We mailed our questionnaires to 9,956 sampled schools in 5,459 associated districts across the country in May 1994. We did a follow-up mailing in July 1994 and again in October 1994. After each mailing, we telephoned nonresponding districts to encourage their responses. We accepted returned questionnaires through early January 1995.

Of the 9,956 schools in the original sample, 393 were found to be ineligible for our survey.[11] Subtracting these ineligible schools from our original sample yielded an adjusted sample of 9,563 schools. The number of completed, usable school questionnaires returned was 7,478. Dividing the number of completed, usable returns by the adjusted sample yielded a school response rate of 78 percent.

We compared nonrespondents with respondents by urbanicity, location, state, race and ethnicity, and poverty. Few notable differences existed among the groups. On the basis of this information, we assumed that our

[10]Robert Abramson et al., 1993-84 Schools and Staffing Survey: Sample Design and Estimation. NCES (available July 1995).

[11]Reasons for ineligibility included school no longer in operation, entity not a school, private rather than public school, and postsecondary school only.

respondents did not differ significantly from the nonrespondents.[12] Therefore, we weighted the respondent data to adjust for nonresponse and yield representative national estimates.

Measures of Central Tendency and Other Analytic Decisions

All analyses in this report are based on data from two multiresponse questions about spending (see app. I). In both cases, the resulting distributions were severely skewed, making no single measure of central tendency adequate to describe the distribution. In cases where kurtosis makes statistical description difficult, analysts sometimes use the median as the preferred measure of central tendency. However, in this case, both distributions divided naturally into a low-spending group and a high-spending group, with the mean providing a convenient reference point for this division. Our visits to school districts confirmed that spending for accessibility improvement often fell into categories of minor improvements or major improvements. Therefore, we chose to divide the distribution for further analyses at a point that separated it into low-spending schools and high-spending schools, a point that corresponded to the mean. We felt that analyses of these categories both presented an honest treatment of the data and provided practical, useful information.

Sampling Errors

All sample surveys are subject to sampling error, that is, the extent to which the results differ from what would be obtained if the whole population had received the questionnaire. Since the whole population does not receive the questionnaire in a sample survey, the true size of the sampling error cannot be known. However, we can estimate it from the responses to the survey. The estimate of sampling error depends largely on the number of respondents and the amount of variability in the data.

Variability in the data is particularly relevant to this report. Analyses are based on the dollar amount reported by schools in response to questions about past and future spending on accessibility. The wide range of dollar amounts reported reduced the amount of precision with which we could produce dollar estimates. For this reason, we limited our dollar estimates to a national level estimate of average and total dollars spent and to totals and averages of those schools' spending above and below specified amounts. We then looked at proportions of schools that reported spending in these categories by a number of variables.

[12]Detailed sample and response information for each sample stratum is available upon request. See appendix V for appropriate staff contacts.

Sampling errors for estimates appearing in the text are equal to or less than ± 5 percent unless listed in tables II.1 and II.2 at the end of this appendix.

Nonsampling Errors

In addition to sampling errors, surveys are also subject to other types of systematic error or bias that can affect results. This is especially true when respondents are asked to answer questions of a sensitive nature or when questions are inherently subject to error. Lack of understanding of these issues can also result in systematic error. Bias can affect both response rates and the way respondents answer particular questions. It is not possible to assess the magnitude of the effect of biases, if any, on the results of a survey. Rather, possibilities of bias can only be identified and accounted for when interpreting results. This survey had two major possible sources of bias: (1) bias inherent in all self-ratings or self-reports and (2) sensitivity of compliance issues.

Bias inherent in self-rating may impact results of surveys because integrity of the data depends upon respondents' providing honest and accurate answers to the questions asked. The results of this report were affected by the extent to which respondents accurately reported expenditures and the extent to which they could provide accurate estimates for projected spending. When, as in this case, responses are not verified, the possibility of this kind of bias always exists.[13]

A second kind of bias that may occur results from the sensitivity of compliance issues. In this case, our interest in securing information on compliance with federal mandates put the survey in a highly sensitive area. For example, respondents may have perceived that accurately reporting accessibility problems could make school districts vulnerable to lawsuits, despite assurances of confidentiality. Consequently, in such sensitive areas, schools may have underreported or made conservative estimates.

In general, survey results confirmed our site visit observations.

Site Visits

To illustrate and augment our survey results, we visited 10 districts: Chicago, Illinois; Grandview, Washington; Montgomery County, Alabama;

[13]Misunderstanding of the accessibility legal requirements also may come into play. In a study of ADA implementation, GAO found that 28 to 35 percent of the barrier removal efforts to comply with legal requirements planned by owners and managers of establishments covered by ADA were not necessary. See Americans With Disabilities Act: Effects of the Law on Access to Goods and Services (GAO/PEMD-94-14, June 21, 1994).

New Orleans, Louisiana; New York, New York; Pomona, California; Ramona, California; Raymond, Washington; Richmond, Virginia; and Washington, D.C. Selected to represent key variables, they varied in location, size, and ethnic composition.

During these site visits, we interviewed central office staff, such as district superintendents, facilities directors, and business managers; and school staff, such as principals and teachers. We asked the central office staff about their district demographics, biggest facilities issues, facilities financing, assessment, maintenance programs, resources, and barriers to reaching facilities goals.

In addition, in each district we asked district officials to show us examples of "typical," "best," and "worst" schools and verified reliability of these designations with others. In some small districts, we visited all schools. We spoke with administration and staff in the schools we toured. We asked the school staff about their school's condition, repair and renovation programs, and facilities needs for educational programs.

Classification Variables

The following define the classification variables used for this study: community type, school level, school size, minority enrollment, geographic region, and proportion of students receiving a free or reduced lunch.

Community Type

Central City

A large central city (a central city of a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA)) with population greater than or equal to 400,000 or a population density greater than or equal to 6,000 per square mile) or a mid-size central city (a central city of an SMSA, but not designated a large central city).

Urban Fringe/Large Town

Urban fringe of a large or mid-size central city (a place within an SMSA of a large or mid-size central city and defined as urban by the U.S. Bureau of the Census) or a large town (a place not within an SMSA but with a population greater than or equal to 25,000 and defined as urban by the Bureau of the Census).

Rural/Small Town

Rural area (a place with a population of less than 2,500 and defined as rural by the Bureau of the Census) or a small town (a place not within an

	SMSA, with a population of less than 25,000 but greater than or equal to 2,500 and defined as urban by the Bureau of the Census).
School Level	
Elementary	A school that had grade six or lower or "ungraded" and no grade higher than eighth.
Secondary	A school that had no grade lower than the seventh or "ungraded" and had grade seven or higher.
Combined	A school that had grades higher than the eighth and lower than the seventh.
School Size	
Small	A school with fewer than 300 students.
Medium	A school with more than 299 but fewer than 600 students.
Large	A school with 600 students or more.
Minority Enrollment	The percentage of students defined as minority using the following definition for minority: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Hispanic, regardless of race (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other culture or origin); black (not of Hispanic origin).
Geographic Region	
Northeast	Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.
Midwest	Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas.

South	Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.
West	Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Proportion of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch	The calculation is based on survey question 4 ("What was the total number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students enrolled in this school around the first of October 1993?") and survey question 25 ("Around the first of October 1993, how many applicants in this school were approved for the National School Lunch Program?").

Table II.1: Sampling Errors Greater Than 5 Percent

Page of first occurrence	Description of estimate	95-percent confidence interval (percent)
3	Total accessibility dollars spent—$1.5 billion	± 19.5
2	Pie chart—last 3 years	
	Accessibility	± 5.1
2	Pie chart—next 3 years	
	Accessibility	± 13.6
	Asbestos	± 6.5
	Other	± 19.4
3	Total accessibility dollars needed—$5.2 billion	± 14.9
5	Average spent for below average spenders—$8,000	± 5.8
5	Average last 3 years—$40,000	± 19.3
6	Proportion of schools' spending in District of Columbia—7 percent	± 5.8
6	Proportion of schools' spending in New Mexico—69 percent	± 9.2
6	Proportion spending not needed, New York—40 percent	± 10.0
6	Hawaii—60 percent above average	± 17.3
6	California—one-third above average	± 10.9
6	New Jersey—one-third above average	± 15.1
6	Northeast, above average spending	± 6.4
8	Next 3 years, 93 percent	± 6.6
8	Next 3 years, 34 percent	± 9.4
8	Average needed to spend—$124,000	± 14.6
8	Average for below average—$34,000	± 5.1
8	One-third above average	
8	Connecticut	± 18.9
8	Hawaii	± 18.9
8	Maryland	± 15.7
8	Massachusetts	± 15.9
8	New Jersey	± 13.1
8	Pennsylvania	± 17.6
8	Wisconsin	± 12.6

Table II.2: Sampling Errors for State Tables

State	Table III.1	III.2	IV.1	IV.2
Alabama	B	B	B	B
Alaska	B	C	B	B
Arizona	B	B	B	B
Arkansas	B	A	B	B
California	B	C	B	B
Colorado	C	C	B	D
Connecticut	C	D	C	D
Delaware	D	C	C	C
District of Columbia	B	A	B	C
Florida	C	C	C	B
Georgia	B	B	C	C
Hawaii	C	D	C	D
Idaho	B	B	B	B
Illinois	B	C	B	B
Indiana	B	B	B	C
Iowa	C	B	B	C
Kansas	B	B	B	B
Kentucky	C	B	C	C
Louisiana	B	B	B	B
Maine	C	B	C	C
Maryland	C	A	C	D
Massachusetts	C	E	C	D
Michigan	C	C	C	B
Minnesota	C	C	B	C
Mississippi	B	B	B	A
Missouri	B	B	C	B
Montana	C	B	B	C
Nebraska	C	B	C	B
Nevada	B	A	B	B
New Hampshire	C	D	C	E
New Jersey	C	D	C	C
New Mexico	B	B	B	B
New York	C	C	B	C
North Carolina	B	B	B	B
North Dakota	B	B	B	B
Ohio	C	C	B	B

(continued)

	Table			
State	**III.1**	**III.2**	**IV.1**	**IV.2**
Oklahoma	B	A	B	A
Oregon	B	A	B	B
Pennsylvania	C	C	C	D
Rhode Island	C	C	C	D
South Carolina	B	B	B	C
South Dakota	B	C	B	B
Tennessee	B	C	B	C
Texas	B	B	B	B
Utah	B	B	B	B
Vermont	C	D	B	C
Virginia	B	B	C	B
Washington	B	B	B	B
West Virginia	B	C	B	C
Wisconsin	C	C	C	C
Wyoming	C	C	C	B

KEY
A = 5 percent or less
B = greater than 5 percent to 10 percent
C = greater than 10 percent to 15 percent
D = greater than 15 percent to 20 percent
E = greater than 20 percent to 25 percent

Schools' Reported Spending on Accessibility in the Last 3 Years

Table III.1: Money Reported Needed and Spent on Accessibility in the Last 3 Years, State Analyses

		Percent of schools reporting			
State	Number of schools	No money spent	Below average[a] spending	Above average spending	No money needed
Alabama	1,116	24.4	47.9	2.7	25.0
Alaska	435	34.3	37.1	9.3	19.4
Arizona	956	32.5	44.5	11.9	11.1
Arkansas	998	18.6	58.6	2.0	20.7
California	6,662	33.7	34.6	18.3	13.4
Colorado	1,321	40.9	36.4	10.7	12.0
Connecticut	839	40.0	23.6	11.6	24.7
Delaware	136	26.2	59.5	7.1	7.2
District of Columbia	148	91.8	6.9	0.0	1.3
Florida	1,791	32.1	39.1	17.8	11.0
Georgia	1,577	12.9	57.0	10.8	19.3
Hawaii	207	34.9	16.2	25.3	23.7
Idaho	548	27.4	38.6	4.7	29.4
Illinois	3,504	20.0	36.5	10.3	33.3
Indiana	1,728	25.0	48.3	16.4	10.3
Iowa	1,324	28.4	44.8	6.3	20.5
Kansas	1,399	27.4	50.3	7.9	14.4
Kentucky	1,099	30.4	37.1	7.0	25.5
Louisiana	1,304	29.6	50.4	10.2	9.7
Maine	672	17.0	57.4	5.0	20.7
Maryland	887	50.1	41.5	1.9	6.5
Massachusetts	1,472	48.8	18.1	8.8	24.4
Michigan	2,735	21.3	45.3	14.1	19.4
Minnesota	1,339	25.3	39.3	18.9	16.5
Mississippi	896	16.9	57.3	4.1	21.7
Missouri	1,824	18.1	59.2	6.9	15.8
Montana	736	28.3	36.5	4.8	30.3
Nebraska	1,220	29.1	40.2	12.4	18.3
Nevada	343	42.1	48.0	1.0	8.9
New Hampshire	392	27.5	29.4	8.1	35.1
New Jersey	1,963	20.9	34.4	18.8	25.9
New Mexico	633	17.8	58.9	10.2	13.1
New York	3,575	15.2	30.9	13.5	40.4
North Carolina	1,776	15.6	59.7	8.0	16.7
North Dakota	531	31.9	38.9	4.2	25.0

(continued)

State	Number of schools	Percent of schools reporting: No money spent	Below average[a] spending	Above average spending	No money needed
Ohio	3,198	53.1	37.4	5.3	4.2
Oklahoma	1,616	22.7	56.9	2.9	17.6
Oregon	1,149	32.5	60.7	3.5	3.3
Pennsylvania	2,486	32.0	33.1	10.5	24.4
Rhode Island	287	17.4	38.5	14.7	29.4
South Carolina	958	29.2	35.9	4.6	30.3
South Dakota	524	23.0	33.6	7.7	35.7
Tennessee	1,358	38.6	28.5	7.4	25.5
Texas	5,300	14.2	51.9	8.1	25.9
Utah	625	20.0	63.9	4.2	11.9
Vermont	293	29.2	28.3	8.4	34.1
Virginia	1,613	27.3	54.7	5.2	12.8
Washington	1,644	25.2	43.4	7.2	24.2
West Virginia	798	36.5	27.2	7.1	29.2
Wisconsin	1,565	24.5	47.8	12.2	15.5
Wyoming	393	28.9	34.6	6.6	30.0

[a]Average = $40,000 per school

Table III.2: Schools' Reported Spending on Accessibility in the Last 3 Years, State Analyses

State	Percent of schools reporting: Below average[a] spending	Above average spending
District of Columbia	100.0	0.0
Nevada	98.0	2.0
Arkansas	96.6	3.4
Maryland	95.5	4.5
Oklahoma	95.2	4.8
Alabama	94.7	5.3
Oregon	94.6	5.4
Utah	93.8	6.2
Mississippi	93.4	6.6
Maine	92.0	8.0
Virginia	91.3	8.7
North Dakota	90.2	9.8
Missouri	89.6	10.4
Delaware	89.3	10.7

(continued)

State	Percent of schools reporting	
	Below average[a] spending	Above average spending
Idaho	89.1	10.9
South Carolina	88.7	11.3
Montana	88.4	11.6
North Carolina	88.2	11.8
Iowa	87.7	12.3
Ohio	87.6	12.4
Kansas	86.5	13.5
Texas	86.5	13.5
Washington	85.9	14.1
New Mexico	85.3	14.7
Georgia	84.1	15.9
Kentucky	84.1	15.9
Wyoming	84.0	16.0
Louisiana	83.1	16.9
South Dakota	81.4	18.6
Nationwide average	**80.8**	**19.2**
Alaska	79.9	20.1
Wisconsin	79.6	20.4
Tennessee	79.5	20.5
West Virginia	79.4	20.6
Arizona	78.9	21.1
New Hampshire	78.4	21.6
Illinois	77.9	22.1
Colorado	77.2	22.8
Vermont	77.1	22.9
Nebraska	76.5	23.5
Michigan	76.3	23.7
Pennsylvania	76.0	24.0
Indiana	74.7	25.3
Rhode Island	72.4	27.6
New York	69.6	30.4
Florida	68.7	31.3
Minnesota	67.5	32.5
Massachusetts	67.3	32.7
Connecticut	67.0	33.0
California	65.4	34.6
New Jersey	64.6	35.4
Hawaii	38.9	61.1

(Table notes on next page)

[a]Average = $40,000 per school

Table III.3: Money Reported Needed and Spent on Accessibility in the Last 3 Years

		Percent of schools reporting			
Characteristic	Number of schools	No money spent	Below average[a] spending	Above average spending	No money needed
Community type					
Central city	20,605	35.1	36.5	10.6	17.8
Urban fringe/large town	19,043	27.0	42.7	12.4	17.9
Rural/small town	32,167	22.6	46.1	8.4	22.9
Geographic region					
Northeast	11,980	26.4	31.4	12.3	30.0
Midwest	20,893	28.1	43.4	10.4	18.1
South	23,371	24.2	48.4	7.3	20.1
West	15,653	31.7	40.7	12.2	15.4
School size					
Small (1-299 students)	19,401	30.5	39.7	5.9	23.9
Medium (300-599 students)	30,274	27.8	44.4	9.0	18.8
Large (600+ students)	22,222	23.9	42.2	15.3	18.6
School level					
Elementary	51,004	28.2	42.1	8.8	20.9
Secondary	18,319	24.6	44.2	14.0	17.2
Combined	2,574	28.9	36.4	8.6	26.1
Proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch					
Less than 20 percent	15,969	26.9	42.2	13.5	17.3
20 to less than 40 percent	15,283	25.7	46.4	8.5	19.4
40 to less than 70 percent	15,346	29.3	41.5	9.4	19.8
70 percent or more	13,941	25.2	43.7	8.8	22.3
Proportion of minority students					
Less than 5.5 percent	27,430	27.4	44.0	8.1	20.5
5.5 percent to less than 20.5 percent	15,660	24.8	45.3	10.4	19.5
20.5 percent to less than 50.5 percent	13,736	27.2	45.0	10.9	16.9
50.5 percent or more	14,860	29.8	34.6	12.8	22.8

[a]Average = $40,000 per school

Table III.4: Other Characteristics of Schools That Reported Spending on Accessibility in the Last 3 Years

Characteristic	Number of schools	Percent of schools reporting	
		Below average[a] spending	Above average spending
Community type			
Central city	9,702	77.5	22.5
Urban fringe/large town	10,499	77.4	22.6
Rural/small town	17,534	84.5	15.5
Geographic region			
Northeast	5,232	71.9	28.1
Midwest	11,247	80.7	19.3
South	13,029	86.8	13.2
West	8,275	76.9	23.1
School size			
Small (1-299 students)	8,845	87.1	12.9
Medium (300-599 students)	16,152	83.1	16.9
Large (600+ students)	12,785	73.4	26.6
School level			
Elementary	25,966	82.7	17.3
Secondary	10,659	75.9	24.1
Combined	1,157	80.9	19.1
Proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch			
Less than 20 percent	8,904	75.7	24.3
20 to less than 40 percent	8,393	84.4	15.6
40 to less than 70 percent	7,809	81.6	18.4
70 percent or more	7,323	83.2	16.8
Proportion of minority students			
Less than 5.5 percent	14,286	84.5	15.5
5.5 percent to less than 20.5 percent	8,725	81.3	18.7
20.5 percent to less than 50.5 percent	7,674	80.5	19.5
50.5 percent or more	7,049	73.0	27.0

[a]Average = $40,000 per school

Schools' Estimated Accessibility Spending Needs in the Next 3 Years

Table IV.1: Money Estimated Needed for Accessibility in the Next 3 Years, State Analyses

State	Number of schools	Percent of schools reporting: No money needed	Below average[a] spending	Above average spending	Amount needed unknown
Alabama	1,184	26.9	38.6	3.8	30.7
Alaska	428	23.3	41.1	13.1	22.5
Arizona	1,030	14.0	61.2	12.1	12.7
Arkansas	998	39.2	41.9	2.8	16.1
California	7,024	21.9	42.2	12.1	23.7
Colorado	1,329	18.1	52.1	17.3	12.6
Connecticut	903	35.4	17.4	21.9	25.4
Delaware	153	15.7	60.4	13.5	10.3
District of Columbia	143	4.4	37.8	55.6	2.2
Florida	1,917	19.2	42.1	5.6	33.0
Georgia	1,485	35.3	35.1	7.1	22.5
Hawaii	220	21.6	19.8	14.2	44.4
Idaho	565	24.0	46.2	7.1	22.8
Illinois	3,682	22.7	54.5	10.5	12.3
Indiana	1,750	21.3	52.9	16.7	9.2
Iowa	1,407	22.2	44.0	14.2	19.6
Kansas	1,437	23.3	47.5	13.4	15.7
Kentucky	1,150	37.2	30.6	11.1	21.1
Louisiana	1,326	18.8	55.5	12.1	13.6
Maine	693	36.7	43.4	7.8	12.1
Maryland	911	14.6	28.2	29.8	27.3
Massachusetts	1,668	29.5	27.9	23.9	18.6
Michigan	2,975	23.8	49.6	5.5	21.1
Minnesota	1,397	20.8	48.6	23.0	7.6
Mississippi	935	24.8	55.0	0.5	19.7
Missouri	1,941	21.7	55.8	6.1	16.5
Montana	800	37.2	29.1	7.4	26.3
Nebraska	1,189	22.2	48.8	14.0	14.9
Nevada	339	19.2	66.4	6.1	8.2
New Hampshire	406	41.0	28.8	12.7	17.6
New Jersey	2,242	20.7	44.8	25.3	9.2
New Mexico	658	11.7	59.5	16.0	12.9
New York	3,712	46.1	25.7	8.6	19.7
North Carolina	1,823	23.7	53.5	14.5	8.3
North Dakota	543	31.1	39.0	5.3	24.6

(continued)

State	Number of schools	Percent of schools reporting: No money needed	Below average[a] spending	Above average spending	Amount needed unknown
Ohio	3,427	10.8	57.9	11.9	19.3
Oklahoma	1,672	28.8	56.1	4.4	10.7
Oregon	1,167	4.6	67.5	15.2	12.6
Pennsylvania	2,369	38.1	25.2	13.7	23.1
Rhode Island	295	40.3	27.7	12.1	20.0
South Carolina	976	37.4	35.0	6.1	21.5
South Dakota	526	22.8	35.5	7.5	34.2
Tennessee	1,476	33.3	22.9	10.2	33.7
Texas	5,448	27.2	43.6	7.4	21.9
Utah	666	13.4	71.6	11.1	3.8
Vermont	291	52.1	35.9	3.2	8.7
Virginia	1,675	21.3	50.3	11.0	17.4
Washington	1,689	32.4	46.2	11.2	10.2
West Virginia	836	31.2	33.8	7.9	27.1
Wisconsin	1,650	24.3	36.7	19.6	19.3
Wyoming	392	17.8	60.1	6.7	15.4

[a]Average = $124,000 per school

Table IV.2: Schools' Estimated Spending on Accessibility in the Next 3 Years, State Analyses

State	Percent of schools estimating: Below average[a] spending	Above average spending
Mississippi	99.2	0.8
Arkansas	93.7	6.3
Oklahoma	92.7	7.3
Vermont	91.7	8.3
Nevada	91.5	8.5
Alabama	91.1	8.9
Missouri	90.2	9.8
Michigan	90.0	10.0
Wyoming	89.9	10.1
Florida	88.2	11.8
North Dakota	88.1	11.9
Idaho	86.7	13.3
Utah	86.5	13.5
Texas	85.5	14.5

(continued)

State	Percent of schools estimating Below average[a] spending	Above average spending
South Carolina	85.0	15.0
Maine	84.7	15.3
Illinois	83.8	16.2
Arizona	83.6	16.4
Georgia	83.2	16.8
Ohio	82.9	17.1
South Dakota	82.7	17.3
Louisiana	82.2	17.8
Virginia	82.0	18.0
Delaware	81.7	18.3
Oregon	81.6	18.4
West Virginia	81.1	18.9
Washington	80.5	19.5
Montana	79.7	20.3
Nationwide average	**79.1**	**20.9**
New Mexico	78.8	21.2
North Carolina	78.7	21.3
Kansas	78.0	22.0
California	77.7	22.3
Nebraska	77.7	22.3
Indiana	76.0	24.0
Alaska	75.9	24.1
Iowa	75.6	24.4
Colorado	75.1	24.9
New York	75.0	25.0
Kentucky	73.4	26.6
Rhode Island	69.7	30.3
New Hampshire	69.5	30.5
Tennessee	69.2	30.8
Minnesota	67.9	32.1
Wisconsin	65.2	34.8
Pennsylvania	64.8	35.2
New Jersey	63.9	36.1
Hawaii	58.2	41.8
Massachusetts	53.9	46.1
Maryland	48.6	51.4
Connecticut	44.3	55.7
District of Columbia	40.5	59.5

(Table notes on next page)

[a]Average = $124,000 per school

Table IV.3: Money Estimated Needed on Accessibility in the Next 3 Years

Characteristic	Number of schools	Percent of schools reporting: No money needed	Below average[a] spending	Above average spending	Accessibility requirements unknown
Community type					
Central city	21,663	21.6	44.5	14.1	19.8
Urban fringe/large town	19,698	20.1	46.1	14.5	19.2
Rural/small town	33,463	31.3	42.6	8.3	17.7
Geographic region					
Northeast	12,577	36.4	30.1	15.5	18.0
Midwest	21,924	21.0	50.4	12.0	16.6
South	24,110	27.1	42.7	8.9	21.2
West	16,307	20.9	48.4	12.2	18.5
School size					
Small (1-299 students)	20,457	29.5	42.6	8.6	19.3
Medium (300-599 students)	31,679	25.2	45.8	10.1	18.9
Large (600+ students)	22,782	22.4	43.0	16.6	18.0
School level					
Elementary	53,375	25.9	44.5	10.6	18.9
Secondary	18,890	23.9	43.5	15.0	17.6
Combined	2,654	29.1	38.8	9.0	23.0
Proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch					
Less than 20 percent	16,516	25.1	45.8	12.5	16.5
20 to less than 40 percent	15,686	26.1	44.0	9.7	20.2
40 to less than 70 percent	15,921	23.6	45.9	12.0	18.5
70 percent or more	14,570	25.7	44.8	11.0	18.4
Proportion of minority students					
Less than 5.5 percent	28,456	28.2	43.9	9.9	18.1
5.5 percent to less than 20.5 percent	16,138	26.8	44.8	11.4	16.9
20.5 percent to less than 50.5 percent	14,308	20.3	46.5	12.6	20.6
50.5 percent or more	15,794	24.1	41.5	14.4	19.8

[a]Average = $124,000 per school

Table IV.4: Other Characteristics of Schools That Reported Spending on Accessibility

Characteristic	Number of schools	Percent of schools reporting	
		Below average[a] spending	Above average spending
Community type			
Central city	12,694	75.9	24.1
Urban fringe/large town	11,940	76.1	23.9
Rural/small town	17,049	83.6	16.4
Geographic region			
Northeast	5,735	65.9	34.1
Midwest	13,683	80.7	19.3
South	12,454	82.7	17.3
West	9,882	79.9	20.1
School size			
Small (1-299 students)	10,473	83.3	16.7
Medium (300-599 students)	17,701	81.9	18.1
Large (600+ students)	13,580	72.2	27.8
School level			
Elementary	29,436	80.8	19.2
Secondary	11,050	74.4	25.6
Combined	1,269	81.2	18.8
Proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch			
Less than 20 percent	9,645	78.5	21.5
20 to less than 40 percent	8,422	81.9	18.1
40 to less than 70 percent	9,217	79.3	20.7
70 percent or more	8,134	80.2	19.8
Proportion of minority students			
Less than 5.5 percent	15,301	81.6	18.4
5.5 percent to less than 20.5 percent	9,071	79.8	20.2
20.5 percent to less than 50.5 percent	8,456	78.7	21.3
50.5 percent or more	8,867	74.3	25.7

[a]Average = $124,000 per school

Appendix V

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